

# MAN'S ORIGIN AND DESTINY

ADMIRATION FOR THE MARTYR TO LIBERTY.—PITY FOR THE FANATIC WHO DIES FOR IMAGINARY CAUSES.

—REVIEW OF RELIGIOUS INFLUENCES AS SHOWN BY HISTORY AND FACT.

(By Dr. A. Hausman.)

We don't see any other standard in history by which to measure the value of a nation, than the physical power, which however depends always on the peaceable development within a nation, equivalent to numerical increase and utilization of the natural forces. The invention of powder for instance, gave the European nations at once the supremacy over all other races. The highest state of civilization before the present era we find with the Greeks and after their downfall the Romans stand at the head of the world for some time. From the ruins of this mighty empire rose the gloomy, barbarous era of christianity, which ruthlessly destroyed most of what was left of the heathenish civilization. For fifteen hundred years the church ruled supreme and during this long time history is a record of idiocy and superstition. The great deeds are great crimes and follies, the monuments of christian humanity are the stake, the scaffold and the chamber of torture. Then began the age of reformation, characterized by the emancipation of part of the nations from the central power of the church at Rome, embodied in the person of the pope. Although superstition and fanaticism still remained, greater freedom was accorded individual opinion and scientific research, which finally brought on a great change of ideas in regard to man's relation to nature, inaugurating the present era by whatever name it may be known to posterity.

As stated above, the deleterious effect of the false christian doctrines lies in rendering the people moral cowards and submissive slaves to those, who like the fetish man, take advantage of their faults for their own material benefit. It was the church and the ruling powers who profited by the helpless moral condition to which the belief in supernatural powers reduced the faithful subjects. Ignorance was at the bottom in both cases, but while it assumed an irrational form among the ignorant, who surrendered the fruits of their labor, or even their life, from fear of hell, it was perfectly rational with the members of the church and the rulers on the throne, because they received real for imaginary value. But whatever may be our feeling in regard to the poor deluded slaves, we cannot help admitting that their oppressors were the abler of the two and the fittest to survive.

We hear of martyrs in the early days of Christianity and their heroic death is quoted as proof of the truth of the cause for which they died. If a man died for a conviction was a proof of its truth, the Buddhists of the Indians must be the truest of all religions, for these fanatics have cast themselves in great numbers before the carriage of the Juggernaut, to be crushed beneath its wheels.

is the dubious privilege of the divine man to sacrifice himself for an imbecility, of which the animal is incapable,—“More beastly than the beast,” says Goethe. Whatever may be true of these stories of martyrdom, fanaticism that leads to self-destruction or mutilation, is always a sign of a low intellectual standard, and is met with only among savages and the lowest classes of civilized nations; for instance, the Flagellantes in New Mexico. We can justly respect and admire a man who dies fighting for his country, family or liberty, but we can only pity the fanatic who dies for an imaginary cause.

That the mere change of form in the worship of the unknown powers, the only difference between heathendom and Christendom, did not effect a radical change in the moral faculties of the people, is demonstrated by the behavior of the Christians after they had attained the supremacy, about the fourth century. The innate barbarity and cruelty of that age was not eradicated and supplanted by nobler emotion with the adoption of the christian rites, and the actions of the first Christians do not divulge any improvement in this respect. They destroyed with a rude hand the splendid monuments of art and the records of science and baptized the heathen with fire and sword. They have no reason to be proud of the first christian emperor, Constantine, who was a monster in nature, with his apostate successor. Instead of proving by their deeds that there was any truth in the doctrine of love, they quarreled continually among themselves and fought over the absurdest dogmas. It is quite edifying to read the history of the popes, the vicars of Christ on earth. Among those who ruled during the first twelve hundred years were many who committed all crimes imaginable, murder, mutilation, incest, etc., so that it would be difficult to find a criminal now-a-days so thoroughly debased and bestialized as one of these high dignitaries of the church. That they were not of a milder disposition at a later period is shown by the horrors of the Inquisition, which was not introduced by one of the popes, was approved and assisted by them. Only since the reformation they have become more humane, from the good reason, that the people don't submit any longer to the charitable treatment of the church by fire and sword. A little harmless cursing is all that his holiness can indulge in today, and the only effect it has upon the intelligent people, is to elicit a smile of contempt.

Two institutions are principally characteristic of the spirit of love and humanity prevailing in the christian church,—the Inquisition and the persecution of witches. Imagine the scene of an “auto-da-fe,” only three hundred years ago. In an open space are placed a number of posts